

Pipe Dream
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BRINGING TV TO THE PEOPLE

by Kirk Fenton

Do you enjoy watching television? Do you find it an entertaining, enlightening, and emotionally satisfying experience? Do you find yourself a better person for watching shows like "The Patridge Family", "Room 222", and "The Edge of Night"?

If the answer to these questions is "No!", then perhaps you might be interested in The Community Center for Television Production. Located at 164 Court Street in Binghamton, the center provides an opportunity for anyone interested in an alternative to commercial network T.V. to learn about and work with the

media.

The center was created two years ago by Ralph Hocking of the SUNY Binghamton Cinema Department. He was sick of network T.V. and its "one directional flow of information"; through the center he is attempting to "bring T.V. to the people." The center is funded by a one year, (renewable) fifty thousand dollar grant from the state and is cooperating with WKSG, channel 46, Binghamton.

Hocking asserts that he will teach an interested person how to use the portable 1/2" video tape machines and then "cut him loose" to learn and create on his own. One of the things a person will learn is that the T.V. screen can produce more than just images of real life. An infinite variety of patterns, colors, moving "3D Waves", and other special effects can be generated, the mastery of which is an art in itself.

If a person is seriously interested in television, he can offer this independent work for four hours credit as Cinema 191, under Hocking's direction.

Accessibility to the T.V. medium by the public is very important (according to Hocking), because it is one of the major forms of communication in our culture

today. He sees the control of the television medium by the major networks as being just as intolerable as a community where only a few have access to paper and writing materials. According to Hocking: "T.V. literacy is necessary."

The center serves three groups of people, and seeks to intergrate their efforts. It provides a creative medium for the artist, for T.V. can be as much an art form as cinema, and has the advantage of immediate playback. It is also an effective tool for the educator because video, which involves sensual perception as well as thinking, "can communicate across boundaries of literacy, age, and background."

In addition, a powerful community "voice" can be mustered by the use of the portable equipment, which is operable by a single person in the street. In this way, television can be a tremendous boon to communications, and a useful "mirror" for the community to see itself in, especially when the center gets a transmitter and begins broadcasts.

But by far the most important aspect of Hocking's community center is the fact that it gives an individual the opportunity to do more with television than merely melt his mind in it.

photo by Jared Sherman

